













MAUD COUSIN.

Mrs. De Vere Javenport finished reading the letter that a servant had just brought in. Then she folded it carefully and returned it to the yellow envelope that was addressed to her in a coarse, sprawling hand. Then she looked at a gentleman sitting at a window reading a morning paper.

"Maud's summering is settled most conclusively for the next year," said Mrs. Javenport. "Sister Cynthia writes that her son, William, Maud's cousin, will spend the summer between Newport and Bangor, and, as a natural consequence, he would join our party. So that poor little Maud must not go away too soon."

"Dr. Javenport looked sharply up from his paper.

"What's the reason? I don't suppose Maud's cousin can hurt her, and it seems a shame to deprive her of her reason."

"Mrs. Javenport's thin, handsome lips trembled into a cold smile.

"I dare say—then never think of such things; but, my dear, it would be sheer folly on our part to expose Maud to the society of her cousin. He may be handsome—all the Maurens are—and he certainly is poor. Suppose he should suppose Maud took it into her head to go to fancy him?"

"Well, suppose she did?"

"Mrs. Javenport gave a little impatient exclamation; that her niece knew, from long experience, meant that she was intended to carry out her own arrangements, in spite of his views and preferences.

"Well, he would not visit Maud's cousin, at least this summer, while she is so young, and romantic, and susceptible. She will have to give up Newport and Bangor, and spend the time we are away with her grandmother, up at the farm in Jefferson county."

"So all because William, Maud's dear old mother had written to her elegant, wealthy sister, who had married a New York, that her son William would join his aunt and cousin at the fashionable resorts, poor little Maud, who had been forced to give up her anticipated round of pleasure and gaiety.

"I think it is too bad, mamma—just too bad for anything," she said, her pretty eyes, blue as forget-me-nots, filling with rebellious tears.

"You must make the best of it," Mrs. Javenport said, chillingly. "It's quite a shame, but unavoidable. And really you will find that up in Jefferson county there are some charming places—the Thousand Islands, the fishing, the boating, the picnics, the views, the air. You will have such an unenviable time."

"But I want to go with you and Leo, Mamma. I just like Willard Maurens for spilling my summer so."

"But, despite Maud's vexation, and her disappointment, and her protest, when her mother wrote to the farm, saying that, if agreeable, she would send her youngest girl out for the summer, when the time of departure came, two days later, Mrs. Javenport and Leo left for their own house, Maud was in good spirits, and went off quite reconciled.

"I shall like it, up on the St. Lawrence River, after all," she assured herself.

And then, when she had been kissed her good-bys, and left her safe and satisfied in Grandma Cleveland's charge, Maud was quite positive that she would enjoy it all.

And so she did—for a week or two, and then she began to regret, and dear old grandma looked her hints for amusement and diversion, and at length was seized with a happy thought, that resulted in an announcement, a week later, that was most acceptable to Maud.

"We just had a letter from one of the girls, and she's going to send me and children out for a spell. I'll be quite company for you, Maudie."

"Oh, dear, yes! I hope another—which auntie is it, grandma? Aunt Cynthia or Samantha?—anyhow I hope she'll send somebody that knows how to be a good out-of-door time. And I'm glad it's of the younger ones. I believe a grown-up girl or young man would be a nuisance, instead of a help."

Grandma peered over her silver-rimmed glasses.

"I wrote pettioler to have one of the children sent, I knew you'd rather have it. So, you must be all ready by to-morrow, Maud."

Maud laughed.

"I don't know how to get ready, grandma. I don't know whether I should wear dominoes and jackstraws for a boy, or my fancy work and my autograph album for a girl."

"Oh, well! It won't make much difference either way. Grandpa'll hitch Nellie up to the carriage, and you might drive down to the landing and bring up the autograph album or boy."

The idea was delightfully exciting to Maud, and she entered into the spirit of it with all her girlish enthusiasm, and when she drove over to the steamboat landing, at Alexandria Bay, the next day, she was quite important.

"There's no telling who or what I will bring back," she thought. "And how ridiculous it seems to think I cannot tell to look for! I suppose I must be governed by appearance and the general opinion of the awkwardness my cousin from the country—be he boy or be she girl—will manifest."

So, when the landlady's passengers were visible coming down the stairs, Maud, standing a little aside, could scrutinize every possible cousin among them—there was no boy or girl of any kind, awkward or polished, among them. A little feeling of disappointment went over her as she turned away.

"I think it very singular that nobody came. I wonder if—"

She never finished the thought, for the suddenly discovered a pair of hands looking around and looking at her; and she belonged to a young gentleman, who dressed in the noblest traveling suit, with the finest of diamonds studs in his line, and an immaculate white shirt and bow tie.

"I beg your pardon, but I would like to know where the Cleveland Farm is?"

What a charming voice it was, and how gracefully he lifted his hat, and how—how handsome those half-mingling gray eyes were!

Maud looked demurely up in them.

"Cleveland Farm is just about two miles in that direction, where the clump of trees are."

The handsome gray eyes followed the direction indicated, and then came back to the sweet girlish face.

"I expected somebody would meet me, but I dare say the detention was unavoidable."

All at once it flashed over Maud, this was "the children" invited to come over to the farm. It seemed a little queer, making such a mistake; but if Grandma Cleveland always called her married daughter "the girl," why Aunt Davenport should call "the girl" speak of their family as the "children."

"A rough little slip of mischief flashed up in Maud's eyes.

"Who did you expect to be here?"

"I didn't know exactly whether my grandfather would come, or send my little cousin to direct me—a stranger to me although she is my cousin. Perhaps you may know her—her name is Davenport."

Maud frowned thoughtfully. This handsome young man was her cousin beyond a shadow of doubt.

"Davenport? Davenport? The name sounds familiar. Yes, that's the little girl, up at Cleveland Farm. I know her quite well."

"I suppose she is a very nice little girl and amuse her. I'll try anyhow."

"I dare say you are. I am greatly obliged to you. Good-bye."

And, as he went away, on foot, he decided that he would search out the little beauty before long.

While Maud, inspired by her wicked little brain, made Nellie fairly fly home again, when the young man was ushered in by grandma, so proud and surprised.

"Well, thought your motherly friend you," she said, smilingly.

"I never see, I was so awfully disappointed in my calculations for the summer, grandma, that they should be so late, and here would be my wonderful beauty, and he laughed very cheerily for a fellow with a sorrow."

"To tell!" grandma said.

"There's nothing to tell, except that all the arrangements were made to visit Newport and Bangor, with Aunt Davenport and the girls; but, Maudie, at the office, had to change his plans, and could not spare me at the time."

A look of sudden amusement finished his

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